

## ABSTRACT

Embodiments focus on imparting a horizontally shifting motion to a plant punch element 1 during a part of a plant punch cycle 18 so as to reduce contact of a plant punching surface 38 with the plant during the plant punch. Plant punch elements that are particularly suited for such “shifting” capability may include a gap 41 facilitating lateral movement of the plant punch element to a position around at least part of the plant to be punched. Aspects of the inventive technology also address a sheltering plant punch apparatus that can also reduce injury and stress experienced by the plant while it is punched. Combinations of aspects disclosed herein provide a high degree of protection to the plant during a plant punch, thereby reducing stress experienced by the plant during the punch.